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ENGRAVING AND PORTRAITURE.

 MONG the miracles of the present time is the taste for the Fine Arts, which forms a prominent characteristic of the American mind. Instead of the tasteless and frequently vulgar prints which, within living memory, used to cover, but not adorn, the walls of our dwelling-houses, in town and country, we now have beautiful engravings, executed in the first style of art, which reproduce and almost infinitely multiply the finest productions of native and foreign talent. This multiplication, it is gratifying to know, is entirely owing to American invention. Some forty years ago, Mr. Perkins, one of the "universal Yankee nation," decarbonized a plate of polished steel, and thereby rendered it as soft and manageable (for the graving tool) as the purest copper-plate. Then, after the engraver had done his work, Mr. Perkins restored the carbon to the metal, thus re-converting it to a steel, so hard that when strongly pressed over and into corresponding plates of decarbonized and softened iron, it communicated a sharp impression to each—so that any number of engraved plates could be prepared from the first, which, when hardened, would supply impressions of the duplicated engraving *ad infinitum*.

Another facile method of multiplying works of art, was invented by a German artist, and since known as Lithography. It is capable of the most delicate yet elaborate working, and one of its numerous phases, bearing the name of Chromo-Lithography (a printing in colors), has obtained a perfection in this city yet unsurpassed in any other place.

The old method of copper-plate engraving, in general use when the demand for impressions was comparatively limited, has nearly fallen into desuetude. The immense demand for engravings has almost driven the copper-plate out of use. Softened steel has set it aside, and its glory is as the glory that has departed. When the copper-plate, with most careful handling, will yield only a few thousand impressions, without retouching (which involves deterioration), the number of impressions which the steel-plate can multiply is positively illimitable.

Aquatint and mezzotint engraving continue somewhat in demand, from the

superior manner in which they are executed by Messrs. Sartain, in this city. Then there are other modes of translating the picture into the engraving, by the electrotype, by glyphography, by zincography, and (for smaller subjects) by wood-engraving. Indeed, it must be admitted that wood-engraving has latterly attained a beauty, delicacy, fidelity, and expression, almost wonderful. In this country, as well as in England, engraving on wood has steadily improved, year after year, until it is difficult to imagine any higher degree of perfection. Such of the illustrated gift-books of the present season as we have seen exhibit a fine quality of art, such as, within even twenty years, it would have been impossible to equal.

From Engraving, we turn to the sister and earlier art of Painting. Has it ever struck any of our readers that portrait-painting is on the decline? We still have Rembrandt Peale and Thomas Sully among us, with a few others of deserved celebrity; the New-Yorkers have a host in Charles Elliott, who surpasses Lawrence himself in presenting the character of the individual; but the race of portrait-painters is apparently dying out. Even miniature painters are few and far between, though Philadelphia has no cause to despond while Mr. Brown continues to bring taste, judgment, a correct idea of form, and a fine taste for delicate coloring to make his beautiful miniatures inimitable in their fidelity and expression. But wherever Art is cultivated—and *that* is wherever Civilization has set her foot—portrait-painters generally have had cause to complain, with Othello, that their occupation is gone. Why not? Their rival, in that line, is the glorious sun himself.

Daguerre and Fox Talbot (who respectively and simultaneously discovered the means of making metal and paper so sensitive as to receive and retain the images, whether of persons or things, as presented by the camera) have almost annihilated the race of painters who produced portraits in oil or water-colors, for which the persons to be represented had to give from three to six sittings, each occupying from one hour to three. By the daguerreotype, the ambrotype, the photograph, a portrait is executed almost as rapidly as thought. The action is nearly momentary, and, when the artist is skillful, the pictorial effect is very fine. We lately saw the Gallery of Eminent Per-

sons (which Mr. Brady, of New-York, has established in Pennsylvania-avenue, Washington), and there beheld the very triumphs of sun-portraiture. The walls are crowded with the portraits of gallant and able men, of beautiful and talented ladies. We shall notice this collection, *per se*, in a day or two and have now alluded to it merely to mention that it now includes, upon a single sheet of prepared paper, eight feet high by five-and-a-half feet in width, full-length and life-size portraits of Mr. Brady himself and two of the gentlemen who operate in his gallery. This most surprising production establishes the fact that, henceforth, Photography will yet further supersede portrait-painting in oil, as it is thus capable of producing life-size likenesses.

If Photography can do these *great*, it can also descend to *small* things—just as the elephant can pick up a pin and rend a forest-oak by main strength. We saw a paragraph in an English journal, a few weeks ago, to the effect that sun-portraits of Albert Smith and Charles Dickens had been produced upon such a small scale that either could be covered by the head of a pin, and yet that, by the aid of a glass, the likeness was very apparent in each case. There may be a "*curiosa felicitas*" in such a miniature, but we should prefer a plain, moderately-sized portrait, without being compelled to ask our friend McAllister, the optician, to lend us a lens with a nine hundred and ninety-nine magnifying power to discover the features.

At the same time, photography has done some interesting things in the miniature line. *Apropos* of the Centenary commemoration of the birth of Robert Burns, our old friend, Henry Lacey, of New-York, collected, arranged, photographed, and published (in this country, and also in Scotland), a group containing authentic portraits of 157 eminent Scotchmen—Burns himself in the centre, small miniature size, while the others surround him, no head occupying more space than a three-cent piece would cover, many being smaller.

Had these portraits been engraved, in the old manner, upon copper or steel, the whole plate, about 15 inches by 12 (and just the size for parlor or library ornament), would have occupied years of labor, probably have cost several thousand dollars, and would have been considered cheap at twenty dollars for a single im-

pression. Twenty years ago, just before Daguerre and Fox Talbot had published their sun-painting discoveries, such would have been the case. How is it now? Mr. Lacey, artistically, grouping various authentic portraits, and reproducing them by Photography, has produced a most interesting picture—the price of which is three dollars, we believe, which is less than two cents a portrait! There is a key, too, which individualizes every person there represented. What a glorious roll it is! from William Wallace and Queen Mary, down to Walter Scott, John Wilson, James Hogg, and Lord Clyde. Even our old acquaintance, Grant Thorburn, is niched in this collection of Scottish worthies. Mr. Lacey has published many other illustrations of Burns, including views of scenery. These are photographed, but a *fac-simile* of Mr. Shattuck's "Young Rogue," delicately executed in chromolithography, illustrates what we have said of the capabilities of that quality of art.

From the illustrious dead, we turn to the eminent and living scholar, statesman, orator—EDWARD EVERETT. Distinguished as he has been during the last forty years, he has latterly added to his popularity, by his noble and most disinterested labors, in co-operation with the Ladies of the Mount Vernon Association of the Union, to secure to his native land the Home and Tomb of Washington. His lectures in aid of this object have accomplished much, and he has lately shown his devotion to the cause by undertaking to write for twelve months in a New-York weekly journal, the whole remuneration for which, \$10,000, he liberally handed over to the Sacred Fund. A large portrait of Mr. Everett, taken from life by M. Wight, and engraved on steel by H. Wright Smith, which has just been published, is appropriately dedicated to the Ladies of the Mount Vernon Association, and is destined to have a considerable sale. It is one of the finest engravings of the sort ever executed in this country, and not only Mr. Everett's friends, but Mr. Everett himself, bear testimony to its success, "both in design and execution," and declare that it has been engraved "with equal fidelity, spirit, and skill." The position is easy, graceful, and natural; the expression faithful and spirited; the face and figure show Mr. Everett as he now is. Mr. Wight is undoubtedly a painter of great ability, and this portrait alone, would gain him a

very high reputation. It can be procured, we believe, from all print venders and booksellers, and, thanks to the facilities which Science has given to Art, its selling price cannot be a fifth of what must have been charged, only twenty years ago, for a work of a similar kind but less merit.

This reduction of price was seldom so fully illustrated as in the recent instance of "The Village Blacksmith," after Herring's fine picture. In common with some 20,000 other persons, we paid our \$3, as subscription to the "COSMOPOLITAN ART ASSOCIATION," for which we received one chance, and two certainties. There was the chance of winning a piece of sculpture or a fine painting, and there was the certainty of obtaining the Illustrated Quarterly Journal of the Association, and an impression of the engraving. As we never calculated on winning a prize, we were neither surprised nor disappointed at our not being among the fortunate few. But we were content, like moderate men as we are, to have the illustrated quarterly, and a print, from one of the finest *genre* pictures of modern times, which, if published in the usual way, could not be sold under \$7 to \$10, and which, before steel plates came into use, would have been sold—a few thousand impressions from a soft copper-plate—at \$25 for a single print. We think our \$3 very profitably expended, and are willing to subscribe again this year. See what is done. Over 20,000 first-class engravings, worthy of being hung on the walls of palaces, distributed throughout the Union, chiefly among the middle ranks of life. At once, and forever, such engravings drive the daubs and the clumsy etchings from the walls, and, constantly in view, cannot fail, silently, but efficiently, to imbue the minds of millions with a taste and feeling for the Beautiful.

The *Illustrated Quarterly*, published by the Association, under whose auspices "The Village Blacksmith" is widely circulated, has evidently been based upon the plan of the *Art Journal* of London, first commenced in 1839, and now generally accepted as the organ of English Art and Artists. Conducted with general ability, its popularity is mainly owing to its illustrations. The *Art Journal*, with a circulation of 40,000 a month, never could have got on half so well, had the old system of copper-plate engraving been continued. A new plate should

then have been engraved for every ten thousand subscribers, and the later impressions would have been faint indeed. The hardened steel-plates, from which duplicates can readily be made, enable the *Art Journal* to present perfectly good impressions among its vast army of subscribers. The Vernon Gallery was engraved in this work, and the Royal Gallery (Queen Victoria's public and private collections) is now proceeding, with equal success and merit. We have to thank Mr. Zieber, agent for the work, for being able to point out the beauty of the illustrations in the January number; these are "Gil Blas at Pennafior," by Maclise; "The Marmosettes," by Sir E. Landseer; "Emily of Rylstone," from the bas-relief by F. M. Miller; and a number of beautiful wood engravings. In time, we doubt not, our own *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* will equal its London rival. But it must not be too rapid. Rome was not built in a day.

As we are upon the subject of Art, we may conclude this article with a recommendation to our city readers, to visit the Academy of the Fine Arts, and gratify themselves with an inspection of the marble statue representing "Eve Repentant," executed for that liberal patron, Joseph Harrison, Esq., by the late Edward S. Bartholomew, and of a merit so surpassing that it is to be felt rather than described. Of itself, this work of art would place Bartholomew among the first of modern sculptors. We may add that by the liberality of Mr. Harrison, this sculpture is exhibited for the benefit of the artist's mother.—*Press*, (Phila.)

NOTE.—The editor of the *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* must be permitted to thank the *Press* for its genial essay, and notice of the engraving "Village Blacksmith." It is a pleasure to chronicle such appreciation. It well answers the oft-repeated inquiry;—"How is it possible for the Association to give so much for the money?" The success and patronage of the past year will enable the Association to give *even more* for the money in the new year (the 6th). We are not able to say further now than that we are sure our friends of the *Press* will have occasion to enlarge upon his essay. He must grow quite enthusiastic over the promise and fulfillment which the "Cosmopolitan Art Association" has in store for "the public."